

Message Text

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20

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1844

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, MY, ID, SN

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES

REF: SINGAPORE 4099

1. KUALA LUMPUR'S SUGGESTION TO INITIATE BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS FOR US NEWSMEN ON IMPORTANCE SEA GOVERNMENT ACCEPT PRINCIPLE OF FIRST ASYLUM STRIKES US AS A GOOD ONE EVEN THOUGH WE ARE NOT COMPLETELY PERSUADED THAT SUCH AN EFFORT IN AND OF ITSELF WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. WHILE THIS EXERCISE IS AIMED PRIMARILY AT SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA, WE BELIEVE IT OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE THAT AWARENESS VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM NOT BE CONFINED JUST TO SEA. BOTH US AND OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD SHARE THIS AWARENESS AND THIS SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN THEIR MEDIA. THUS WE WOULD STRONGLY ENDORSE (B) IN FIRST PARA REFTEL. IN ADDITION, DEPARTMENT MAY BE ABLE TO INCREASE IMPACT THIS WHOLE EFFORT BY BRIEFINGS WITH APPROPRIATE NEWSMEN IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WASHINGTON. MANY MAJOR AMERICAN NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

HAVE THEIR HEADQUARTERS IN HONG KONG AND WE COULD FOLLOW UP SUGGESTED LINE WITH BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS TO SELECTED CORRESPONDENTS HERE.

2. THE ONE CAVEAT WE WOULD HAVE IS THAT WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT DESIRABLE TO EMPHASIZE OR GIVE PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S RECENT ACCEPTANCE OF SEVERAL GROUPS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. HONG KONG AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT BECOME IDENTIFIED IN THE EYES OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AS WELL AS VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS IN SEA AS THE ONLY GOVERNMENT PREPARED TO ACCEPT AND ACT UPON THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST ASYLUM.

3. AS AN INDICATION AS TO HOW TOUGH SINGAPORE IS GOING TO BE ON SUCH CASES AND A POSSIBLE GUIDE TO GOS'S UNDERLYING THINKING BEHIND ITS ATTITUDE, MEMBER OF SINGAPORE COMMISSION IN DISCUSSING THIS PROBLEM WITH SOME OF OUR STAFF IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WERE LIKE HIGHJACKERS AND HAD TO BE STOPPED.

CROSS

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